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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on individualizing instruction as it relates to the diagnosis of the needs of individual learners and the development of appropriate instructional activities to meet these needs. A format is presented for assisting teachers in the process of personalizing instruction in an effort to optimize the learning environment for each pupil. Twelve components of this process are defined and discussed: statement of general topic, specification of content area, rationale, learner outcomes, prerequisites, preassessment, learning activities, post-assessment, remediation and/or enrichment, duration, resources needed and available, and physical arrangement. No statistical research analysis has been conducted on the effectiveness of the format; but it has face validity based upon the comments of some 250 teachers who, over a five-year period, have studied the model, and utilized it in developing and implementing real lessons. (VT)

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A PLANNING FORMAT FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS TO DEVELOP INSTRUCTIONAL MODULES AS A MEANS OF INDIVIDUALIZING INSTRUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

It has become common practice in recent years to speak of individualized instruction and individualizing instruction synonymously. As a result classroom teachers tend to think of instruction as a methodology rather than an orientation to education. Hence, individualizing instruction typically calls to mind such practices as a) learning activity packages; b) independent study; c) one-on-one tutorial programs; d) self-instructional multi-mediated, teacher-free materials; and e) modular scheduling.

The specific focus of this paper, however, is on individualizing instruction as it relates to the diagnosis of the needs of individual learners and the development of appropriate instructional activities to meet these needs. In this respect individualizing is not a methodological phenomenon, but rather a basic philosophical orientation toward personalizing instruction so as to establish a match between teaching and learning style. As Glaser & Cooley (1973) note: "It is now platitudinous to say that instructional systems need to adapt to the requirements of the individual learner ...." (p. 847)

Cronbach (1957) noted that

> Ultimately we should design treatments, not for the average person, but to fit groups of persons with particular aptitude patterns. (p. 681)

Hunt and Sullivan (1974) reiterated the importance of the Lewinian principle of behavior as a function of the interaction between person and environment. In calling for instructional practices that

> attempt to produce a specified behavioral effect through coordination of a particular environment with a particular type of person, (Hunt & Sullivan, 1974, p. 47)

they offered a challenge to teachers to plan on a highly personalized basis that stresses the individual student. A concomitant of this challenge bears directly on teacher training institutions and requires that prospective and inservice teachers be given opportunities to develop and become proficient in a wide repertoire of teaching skills and strategies. The "one right way fallacy" must give way to concentration on a rich variety of models of teachings (Joyce and Weil, 1972) so that a teacher is better able to relate to the instructional needs of a more diversified group of learners.

In recognition of the need for such a reorientation to instruction, the author in working with elementary and secondary teachers in preservice and inservice capacities has sought to establish a format for assisting teachers in the process of personalizing instruction. Feedback from teachers has indicated that many of the problems with individualizing instruction are planning problems, eg., materials not adequately prepared, unclear

varied activities with unvaried learning modes.

The validity of the teacher input is enhanced by the research findings that on-task activity is positively correlated with pupil achievement gains (Rosenshine & Furst, 1971; Rosenshine, 1976; Medley, 1977). Given that teacher task-oriented behavior is a positive correlate of pupil achievement, one might be persuaded quite readily to view planning for instruction as a crucial variable in the instructional process.

The format which follows was developed in an attempt to assist teachers in the planning process of matching, personalizing, and individualizing.

The Format

Twelve components of the process of individualization are specifically developed:

1.0 A Statement of General Topic

2.0 Specification of Content Area

3.0 Rationale

4.0 Learner Outcomes

5.0 Prerequisites

6.0 Preassessment

7.0 Learning Activities

8.0 Post-Assessment

9.0 Remediation and/or Enrichment

10.0 Duration

11.0 Resources Needed and Available

12.0 Physical Arrangement

In considering each of these components more specifically, the teacher is asked to develop each in terms of a specific group of learners. Each component is explained in such a way that the total product accounts for individual differences, and the management of multiple activities.

1.0 General Topic

1.1 This category should contain the area with which the particular module will deal. It answers the question: "What is the area of learning that will be covered?"

2.0 Content Area

2.1 This category should specify the particular content area upon which the module is focused. If the category is inappropriate because the topic is generalizable to all areas and does not focus on a specific content this should be indicated by placing the word "NONE" in this area.

3.0 Rationale

3.1 This category has a dual purpose:

3.1.1 It should focus on the reason why you as a teacher are teaching this particular topic to the students. This orientation focuses on teacher motivation.

3.1.2 It should deal with the reasons why a student should want to learn about this topic. Hence, this orientation focuses on student motivation.

4.0 Learner Outcomes

4.1 This category focuses on the particular cognitive, affective, and/or psychomotor outcomes that the student will have mastered as a result of completing this module. These outcomes are common to all students who complete the module. Hence, while levels of proficiency or mastery may vary, the same outcomes would still be identifiable for all students.

5.0 Prerequisites

5.1 This category is concerned with the prior skills, knowledges, and/or attitudes that this module presupposes and without which the module could not be completed. Pre-requisites should meet both of the above criteria before being listed. If there are no pre-requisites, simply list "NONE".

6.0 Preassessment

6.1 This area deals with developing a pre-test that covers two area:

6.1.1 does the student have the necessary pre-requisites.

6.1.2 has the student already attained the outcomes and therefore must attain a higher degree of proficiency or need not complete the module since he has already mastered the outcomes to a satisfactory level.

6.2 The pre-assessment serves primarily a diagnostic purpose and need not be limited to a written pre-test format.

7.0 Learning Activity(ies) or Alternatives

7.1 This category deals with the instructional options that are available to the student. Each is designed to be a means of meeting some/all of the learner outcomes specified for the module.

7.2 When all of the outcomes cannot be met by a single activity, it is understood that the student would choose more than one activity, but the combination would be appropriate to achieving all of the outcomes.

7.3 The following concepts should be considered in constructing learning activities:

7.3.1 The activity must relate to the expected learner outcomes.

7.3.2 Specific objectives should be specified for each activity. These objectives will relate to the learner outcomes, but can also be specific to the activity itself. These objectives may also be cognitive, affective, and/or psychomotor.

7.3.3 The activities should not only be explained, but fully developed for implementation.

7.3.4 The student should have the option to design his/her own activity as long as it complies with the attainment of the learning outcomes. The student should be held accountable for the outcomes not for taking part in an activity.

7.3.5 For each activity you should be able to name the students who in your professional judgment, you feel would choose a particular activity as appropriate for his/her learning style. This format would allow one to answer the question: "How many activities should I develop?"

7.3.6 Each activity should be categorized as to its instructional mode:

MODE 1: Highly structured. Very specific set of instructions to complete the task.

MODE 2: General guidelines serve as the structure for the student to complete the task but the student's time and materials are not specified to a high degree.

MODE 3: Only the general goal is established, and the student has freedom to determine the means.

7.3.7 Each activity should be categorized by a learning mode:

MODE 1: Affective. A high degree of sensory input and attitudinal development is stressed.

MODE 2: Cognitive. Very rational or cognitive knowledge level approach to the activity.

MODE 3: Group. Very high stress on group interaction and interpersonal development skills.

MODE 4: Independent. High stress on student working independently.

More than one mode may be used for each activity, if appropriate.

7.3.8 Specific criteria for determining completion of the activity should be listed for the student.

8.0 Post Assessment

8.1 This category deals with the specific procedures by which a student would demonstrate achievement of the learner outcomes. These may vary on the basis of the activity chosen or may be an assessment procedure by which general assessment could be made of all students regardless of the activity.

8.2 It should be noted that this assessment is related to achievement of the learner outcomes not the completion of a particular activity.

9.0 Remediation

9.1 This category relates to general plans for remediation were a student unable to demonstrate achievement of the outcomes during the post-assessment.

9.2 On the other hand, if a student has satisfactorily completed the module, the teacher may wish to develop a series of enrichment activities to achieve a higher level of proficiency or follow a line of interest that developed as the student worked in the module.

10.0 Duration of Module

10.1 Time is not a rigid variable in module development since students are allowed to self-pace.

10.2 The teacher should, however, establish a set of guidelines that reflect the amount of class time that will be allotted for completion.

10.3 The length of time may vary with the particular learning activity(ies) by which a student chooses to complete the module.

10.4 The duration of a module may be described in terms of hours, days, or weeks depending upon the individual module.

11.0 Resources Available

11.1 What data about students/pupils do I want as I plan this module?

11.2 What resources are available to the student/pupil as he/she is working with the module.

12.0 Physical Arrangement

12.1 The teacher should actually diagram the physical arrangement of the classroom for the particular day(s) of the module.

12.2 Care should be taken to see that the physical environment is conducive to the task(s) in which pupils will engage and that proximate environments are not in conflict with each other, eg., a group activity center contiguous to a silent reading area.

Conclusion

While the format was developed primarily for elementary and secondary teachers, it may have a more general applicability to college instructors as well, especially those instructors who are interested in functioning in other than a direct instruction-lecture mode.

No statistical research analysis has been conducted on the effectiveness of the format. Its validity is face validity based upon the comments of some 250 teachers who over a five year period have studied the model, and developed and implemented real lessons utilizing it. Criticisms have centered on the amount of time involved in planning for individualizing instruction, but such criticisms could indeed be expected. No comments were received relative to the format being non-functional for a

particular content area. Positive comments related to the increase in student interest in activities, ease of management of multiple activities, involvement of most students in an active way in the learning process, specification of clear goals and objectives, and increased performance and interest by usually passive students.

As with all approaches, this format should not be envisioned to be a panacea for all classroom difficulties, but as a means of personalizing instruction in an effort to optimize the learning environment for each pupil. If it is of assistance to the teacher in helping even one additional student benefit significantly from classroom instruction, the individual will need to judge the value of the time and effort expended. In the mind of the author, it will indeed have been worthwhile.

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